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Engineering Cadettes Reporting

Doris Ann Gregg recounts the training of Curtiss-Wright cadettes as described by former Iowa Staters



Handling the tools of the engineer began with mastering the unfamiliar slide rule; now this is well-known ground to Curtiss-Wright cadettes training to take their place in industry.

THE war-boomed, draft-depleted laboratories and factories of our country are finding it necessary to take women from their white collar tasks to fill the ranks as engineers, draftsmen, welders and riveters. Never before have women been so essential to industry and never have they realized what vast fields were heretofore unopened to them.

The Curtiss-Wright Corporation, realizing the possibilities of women in engineering, is training 800 college women selected from several hundred colleges throughout the country to fill the places of men now in the service. At leading engineering schools—Cornell, Iowa State, Purdue, Minnesota, University of Texas, Pennsylvania State College and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, one may find these engineering cadettes studying the mathematics, drafting, mechanics and dynamics which their male predecessors had mastered. The average cadette is not quite 20 years old, is a college junior with 2 years of college mathematics and has a general scholastic standing of B+.

Each cadette receives \$10 a week during her training course, the tuition, board and room being paid by the Curtiss-Wright Corporation. After a 10-month training period, these women will be placed in factories and laboratories affiliated with the corporation.

Five months ago four potential cadettes from Iowa State boarded trains for Troy, N. Y., and Austin, Tex. To Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in New York went Helen Gowen and Patricia Shearer. Southward bound, Gretchen Anton Coy and Emma Wallace went to the University of Texas to begin their training.

The cadettes from Iowa State who are at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and the University of Texas have just completed the first half of their training period, which consisted of basic instruction in the fundamentals of aeronautical engineering, including mathematics, drafting, job terminology, mechanics and an orientation shop course which introduced them to machine lathes, wood-working, riveting, acetylene and electric arc welding.

"Some of these abilities, of course, will not be used by us directly at the plant but will be of great value since we'll know what's going on all over the plant and our work will be more easily done," explained Miss Wallace.

Each of the women may go into the special field in which she is interested. Miss Wallace expects to become an aircraft designer, Miss Gowen plans to specialize in mathematics, Mrs. Coy wants a position in the Test Flight Engineering Section, and Miss Shearer wants to be in the general design and production section.

After completing the course the women will be sent to the Curtiss-Wright plant which corresponds to their major. When they arrive at the plant, they will be given additional training in general procedure before being placed on productive work. The time required for this training depends upon the individual student.

These four cadettes believe that their previous training at Iowa State has proved invaluable to them. Miss Wallace writes, "Gretchen and I agree that we both have an advantage over the other girls because of the unusually high scholastic standing of Iowa State. We both came here knowing how to study."